



Executive Officer's Statement

March 16, 2006

Customer Service Initiative Takes Shape

The State and Consumer Services Agency (SCSA) hosted the third quarterly meeting of its Customer Service Initiative on March 3, 2006. Agencies, boards, and departments of the State and Consumer Services Agency gathered to share strategies for championing excellence in customer service, integrating it into departmental culture, and supporting customer service with tools and knowledge transfer. VCGCB staff attended the meeting and participated in three of the five in-depth focus groups held in preparation for the meeting. Secretary Rosario Marin welcomed the group and emphasized that excellence in customer service is a key objective for the entire SCSA.

New Policies To Increase Access to Dental Treatment for Crime Victims

The Victim Compensation Program recently announced a new policy that will help victims access dental treatment. Dentists may now submit a pre-treatment estimate on an approved American Dental Association claim form, and a VCP analyst will review the estimate and be able to preauthorize payment if necessary. This puts the VCP in line with the common practice of other third-party payers. Dentists will be more likely to accept patients who are VCP claimants if they are aware that treatment can be preauthorized.

The VCP has mailed letters to more than 3,000 dentists in California to let them know about the change. Any dentist who treated a claimant in the last five years has been sent a notice. The VCP is also working with the California Dental Association to publicize the new policy.

A New Web Page for Service Providers

In March, the VCGCB posted a new webpage designed to give medical, mental health, dental, and funeral/burial providers accurate, up-to-date information about how to work with the Victim Compensation Program. The page helps providers understand VCP payment policies, billing procedures, and rate structures. The new page can be found on the VCGCB website at <http://www.vcgcb.ca.gov/ProviderInformation.htm>.

Alameda County Family Justice Center Presentation to Victim Advisory Committee

Nancy O'Malley, Alameda County Chief Assistant District Attorney, was the featured speaker at the March 15 Victim Compensation Program Advisory Committee. She spoke about the successful nine-month-old Alameda County Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center opened in August 2005, and is a one-stop center based on a simple premise: if all services for domestic violence and sexual assault victims are located in one place, survivors will more readily access and receive the critical help they need in a timely fashion. The secure facility is home to the Special Victims Unit from the Oakland Police Department, the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, the Victim/Witness Program, prosecutors from the District Attorneys offices, Family Violence Law Center, Bay Area Legal Aid, domestic violence advocate, DeafHope, and Bay Area Women Against Rape. Services and counseling for children are available there, as well as two child care areas, the Kidzone and the Little Kidzone. More than 50 community organizations participate in the Center.

The Center was chosen as one of a handful to receive federal start-up grants for family justice centers from the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. However, an enthusiastic community has donated much of the labor, furnishings and artwork that enhance the Center. The Center's one-stop approach for victim services has also been established in San Diego and Riverside Counties.

Santa Clara County Launches a New Restitution Court

March saw the launch of a new restitution court in Santa Clara County. Judge Edward Frederick Lee of the Santa Clara County Superior Court will hold the restitution sessions every other week. There were eight cases on the first calendar, and, according to Steve Dippert, staff person for the VCGCB's Santa Clara County Criminal Restitution Compact, they hope to have 20 to 30 cases on each calendar as the system develops. The new restitution court is a collaboration modeled after the successful Alameda County Restitution Court. The court, the District Attorney's office, the Probation Department, and the Public Defender's office have all worked together to make the new court a reality.

California Research Bureau Releases Study on Penalty Assessments

The California Research Bureau of the California State Library released its report "Who Pays For Penalty Assessment Programs in California?" in February 2006. The report, written for the Assembly Public Safety Committee, discusses the complexity of the penalty assessment system in California, including the portions that fund the Victim Compensation Program and victim witness assistance centers. In April the VCGCB will provide the Board with an overview of the report.

VCGCB Updates

Teaming Up Against Identity Theft: A Summit on Solutions

The VCGCB was one of the sponsors of the second annual identity theft summit. Hosted in Los Angeles on February 23, 2006, by the California District Attorneys Office, SCSA, the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Department of Privacy Protection, and the Governor's Office, the summit provided training to help all Californians combat identity theft. VCGCB employees attended the event and staffed an information booth, answered questions about the Board, and distributed the various VCGCB publications.

Training and Outreach

Restitution Recovery and Accounting Division staff provided training to the Monterey County Probation Department on February 17.

The Policy and Training Unit presented a two-week training to new claims processors from Joint Powers Verification Units in Sacramento from February 27 to March 10.